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The Second Death

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And yet, here and there, we hear it,
That muted horn from *Kind of Blue*
Almost as slow, almost that orchidaceous

Blossoming drawn from a sadness
Nameless, we think, but for the music—
With Bird close by and Trane coming on.

THE SECOND DEATH

It takes place sometime after a sleep
In which we've been held in the arms
Of a vague light while our words float
Around us joining and unjoining greyly.

When the trumpets announce the Great Judgment
Everything is as it was when we lived
And we stand before ourselves first
And tell truthfully that what we have done
Is what others did only that we do not
Excuse ourselves from following them.

Then it is that the Hebrew word for hell
Has its beauty restored—gehenna
In signal flare red, the place of garbage
And death near Jerusalem, where the worm
Never dies from eating us.

Only then
Will we truly believe that our lives
Are worthy of eternal punishment.